

A Message from the National Writing Projects of Michigan:

Why do we write? We write to learn, to share our learning with others, to express our creativity, to accomplish our work and the work of others, to make connections—between ideas and between people.

Although writing has traditionally been associated with the teaching of English, today we understand that students who write in all disciplines not only become better writers, they have the opportunity to process their thinking and to become active learners in all disciplines. As highly qualified content area teachers develop plans to integrate writing into disciplinary studies, Michigan's English Language Arts Grade Level Content Expectations in Writing provide a useful framework.

Writing Genres (GN) Writing Process (WP) Spelling (SP) Handwriting (HW)

Grammar & Usage (GR) Personal Style (PS) Writing Attitude (WA)

These seven domains of the GLCE combined with other effective teaching strategies (teacher modeling, authentic inquiry and audience focus, student-centered planning, etc.) will serve as a foundation on which to establish an effective classroom learning community. As teachers with the best interests of our students at heart, such a distributed approach to writing will support our efforts to develop independent and lifelong learners who find pleasure in learning.

Practices and Dispositions for Effective Writing Instruction

To further develop these domains in all subject areas, teachers:

Provide frequent opportunities to write in a variety of writing genres, both academic and personal, ranging from abstracts to analytical essays, from poetry to personal narratives, from brochures to biographies, from web sites to slides (to accompany presentations) (GN).

Integrate writing-to-learn activities such as journaling, double-entry notes, learning logs, writer's notebooks, and other discovery types of writing (PR).

Create assignments as well as invitations that engage students' creativity (AT) and allow for personal choice in topics. Discuss this writing in terms of author's craft and voice (PS).

Teach writing pre-writing, drafting, and revising strategies such as organizing ideas, using peer response, and revising for content/language (PR) as well as discrete skills such as using grammar and punctuation within the context of the writing (GR/SP/HW).

Encourage students to respond to each other's writing (PR/WA). Teach students how to be good responders and think about genre-specific elements when offering suggestions (GN).

Discuss strategies that students can use to respond to on demand writing tasks such as in-class reflections, real-world writing situations (such as an application for an award or a job) and standardized assessments (GN, PR).

Model your own writing practices for your students using "think-alouds" to discuss elements of different genres and expectations of the audience for whom you are writing (WA/GN).

Recognize that all writers will go about composing in slightly different ways and respond with a range of teaching strategies (e.g. strategies that require students to make choices among competing demands of audience and message, strategies that encourage responsible language use, and strategies that encourage new and deeper thinking) (PR/PS).

Practices and Dispositions for Effective Writing Assessment

Moreover, to strengthen and extend their writing program, teachers engage in ongoing, authentic assessment of student writing in order to determine students' development in these domains. There are two types of assessment: formative and summative. In both cases, teachers engage in complex, informed judgment about student work throughout the writing process.

Teachers use formative assessments (such as conferences with student writers and responses to rough drafts) for ongoing, in-process judgments about what students know and what to teach next. Teachers use models of professional and student writing to build understandings about the genres and craft of writing.

Teachers also use summative assessments—sharing early and often the criteria and rationale for evaluation—as final judgments about the quality of student work. This may involve writing done in response to a test prompt or drafts accumulated in a portfolio and reflected on over time.

Classrooms Using Writing—deeper possibilities

| | Pre-Writing | Drafting | Revising | Editing | Publishing |
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| The view at the surface | Gathering and generating ideas. | Getting initial ideas down. | Getting responses/making changes. | Reviewing for grammar and usage. | Sharing writing with teacher and class. |
| An in-depth view, informed by writing research and Best Practices | Looking at genre-specific mentor texts as models (e.g. historical fiction or lab report), examining author's craft, and collecting ideas from various experiences as well as free-writing and group brainstorming. | Discussing how the genre-specific conventions, as well as the audiences and purposes for which the writing is produced, can help shape initial writing. | Giving and getting feedback from peers that asks critical questions of the writing, in light of genre, audience, and purpose. Suggesting appropriate revision strategies. | Incorporating mini-lessons for the class and targeted instruction with students during conferences that look at grammar as part of the writing that makes it understandable to the intended audience. | Moving beyond the classroom and choosing a genre-specific format that is useful for the audience (for instance, creating a research-based brochure for a community service organization). |
| Implications for Instruction and Assessment | Teachers build a collection of texts from a variety of genres and incorporate these directly into classroom instruction, "thinking aloud" about the genre's conventions and demands for student writers. These discussions will help students understand the genre and what kinds of details and examples they can use in it. | Teachers move from specific, pre-defined formats of organization and invite students to experiment with different rhetorical modes (such as compare and contrast, or chronological order, discussing these larger patterns in writing, not just filling in a pre-set outline. | Teachers engage students in discussions about their writing from the earliest stages of drafting, offering feedback and suggestions along the way. This means providing many opportunities for such response, from peers and the teacher. | Teachers become purposeful in their grammar instruction, relying on student work to identify areas of concern and connecting these directly to the genre at hand. Focused editing on one or two key components should be emphasized, rather than correcting everything. Focus is on the writer's growth, not the paper itself. | Teachers provide opportunities for authentic writing as often as possible, inviting students to identify audiences and purposes that they see as compelling and worthwhile to write about. Assessment criteria should be context dependent, not based on a generic rubric. |



As Michigan students engage with the world, it is essential that they write effectively. As Michigan teachers and administrators search for professional learning communities to support their efforts at improving writing instruction, two resources should be highlighted. The National Writing Projects of Michigan (<http://www.nwp-m.org/>) provide statewide

opportunities for long-term professional development partnerships concerning the teaching of writing across all disciplines. The Writing Initiative of the National Council of Teachers of English (<http://www.ncte.org/prog/writing>) provides research support for sound practices in the teaching of writing across all disciplines. Mastery of the skills, processes and strategies taught in a comprehensive K-8 writing program will prepare students to analyze writing situations in the future and apply appropriate strategies in meeting their goals for different genres and authentic tasks, now and in the future.